

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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S-E-C-R-E-T

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1. At a special meeting of the SED Politburo on 1 August 1955, with Otto Grotewohl in the chair, the main item on the agenda was self-criticism by Walter Ulbricht following his trip to Moscow. The meeting was especially arranged for this date because Ulbricht was to go on vacation immediately thereafter.
2. Ulbricht began his remarks by stating that the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had ordered him to engage in self-criticism before the SED Politburo with reference to mistakes which he had made.¹ He indicated that discussion between Wilhelm Pieck and L.M. Kaganovich had revealed that directives passed by the Presidium of the CPSU to Ulbricht as First Secretary of the SED were not transmitted to the Politburo of the SED in the form desired but in such a way that the Politburo passed decrees which were not in the interests of the CPSU.
3. According to Ulbricht, M.A. Suslov and Kaganovich will again visit Berlin in mid-August to discuss further developments with the Politburo of the SED. The future of Ulbricht himself will also be a topic of discussion.
4. In a discussion of Party control matters between Paul Wandel and Grotewohl (before or after the meeting), Ulbricht may also have been discussed. Wandel stated that he did not believe the Presidium of the CPSU would accept the loss of prestige involved in actually dropping Ulbricht. He pointed out that Ulbricht was not dropped after 17 June 1953, when his elimination would have pacified the masses in East Germany; at that time he was kept in his place by the Presidium of the CPSU. Grotewohl did not agree with Wandel, saying that the world political situation demanded a sacrifice and that there were sufficient examples in history to show that if a sacrifice were necessary it would be made.

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1. Comment: Ulbricht had the appearance of a condemned man. He is known in the Central Committee and the Politburo for his sharp criticism of others, but he has never practised much self-criticism. It was particularly bitter for Ulbricht that the Presidium of the CPSU accused him of acting not in the interests of the Party, but for reasons of personal power, in causing the fall of other competent functionaries. The Presidium informed Ulbricht that these tactics had had a catastrophic effect on German politics, and that he therefore bore part of the responsibility for the increase in tension.

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